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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000362

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KCOR](#) [KCRM](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: MILITANCY POST AMNESTY

REF: A. ABUJA 1669  
[1](#)B. LAGOS 356  
[1](#)C. LAGOS 348

Classified By: Consul General Donna Blair, Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: A confidant of former militant leader Dokubo Asari, Rex Anighoro, claims that a new generation of militant leaders will become active if the currently prominent commanders accept the government's amnesty. The large monetary rewards offered to leaders such as "Boyloaf" and "Tom Polo" will motivate young men to engage in militancy in order to demonstrate their capabilities to politicians so that they will be hired to provide fire-power for the next elections. Anighoro predicted that future attacks, which he said could start shortly after the expiration on September 15 of the ceasefire announced by the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), will be focused less on oil installations and more on government institutions. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Rex Anighoro, President of the Niger Delta Christian Youth Movement and a close associate of Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force founder, Dokubo Asari, told Poloff on September 11 in Lagos that he estimated a little over half of all the militants in the Niger Delta had accepted the GON amnesty. He expects most of the remaining commanders, including Tom Polo, to accept the amnesty shortly before the deadline runs out on October 4. Poloff received a message from the President of the Gbaramatu Youth Council, Sheriff Mulade, on September 13 stating that yet another "high level" delegation had visited Tom Polo to try to convince him to accept amnesty. (Note: Press reports indicate DefMin MG Godwin Abbe met with Tom Polo on Sunday. End Note.)

[1](#)3. (C) Anighoro stressed, however, that this would not bring an end to the violence in the region because new militant groups were forming and new commanders emerging. He specifically mentioned the Urhobo Revolutionary Army, which he claimed was typical of the new groups. (Note: Anighoro is ethnically Urhobo and Urhobos represent the largest ethnic group in Delta State, but have up to now been less involved in violence than Ijaws and Itsekiris. End Note.) These new groups, he said, will attempt to harness ethnic animosities and to portray themselves as advocates for the rights of their ethnic constituents. In reality, he said, the leaders are only interested in gaining notoriety with spectacular armed successes. Anighoro described the new leaders as youths, who have lived by militancy over the last several years and have few legitimate alternatives. He said they

hoped to move from poverty and outlawry to wealth and legitimacy by following the example of their former leaders. The demonstrated career path is first to obtain a reputation as effective commanders of armed bands while using their arms to profit from illegal oil bunkering. The next step is to attract a political patron that pays for their "support" in the next elections. Finally, they receive amnesty, including large pay-offs, which enables them to move into legitimate society.

¶4. (C) Anighoro predicted that, because these other ethnic groups are not located in the riverine areas dominated by the Ijaws and Itsekiri, future attacks will be carried out farther inland than in the past. He further predicted that the target of attacks would shift away from oil and gas installations towards government institutions because reducing oil production reduces illegal bunkering and because these new groups are not located as near to oil producing areas. He believes that the new groups will act largely independently, vying for attention and reputation, but occasionally band together for tactical reasons. The spokesman for MEND, Jomo Gbomo, will continue to issue politicized statements under the MEND name brand but with little relevancy because he will not control the new commanders any more than he did the old.

¶5. (C) Because the government has no credible post-amnesty plans, Anighoro claims that any commander accepting the amnesty will be pursuing his material self-interest only. People sincerely interested in change, such as (he claimed) Dokubo Asari, will not accept amnesty until there are

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credible assurances that real change will take place in the way the Niger Delta is governed. According to Anighoro, only a Sovereign National Conference and the promulgation of a new constitution can truly guarantee that kind of change.

¶6. (C) This cable was coordinated with Embassy Abuja.  
BLAIR